

Dependence

The need or compulsion to continue with drugs

Dependency describes a compulsion to continue taking a drug in order to feel good or to avoid feeling bad. When this is done to avoid physical discomfort or [withdrawal](#), it is known as physical dependence; when it has a psychological aspect (the need for stimulation or pleasure, or to escape reality) then it is known as psychological dependence.

Physical dependence is when someone has taken drugs in quantity for a time and comes to rely on the use of them in order to feel well and for their body to function 'normally'. It usually happens when the body has built up a [tolerance](#) to the drug and in its absence, physical withdrawal symptoms appear.

It mainly happens with [depressant](#) drugs like [alcohol](#), [barbiturates](#), [heroin](#) or [tranquillisers](#). However, the deep depressions and even suicidal feelings that can follow [cocaine](#) and [ecstasy](#) use could be counted as physical dependence, because users will take more of the drug to escape these feelings.

Psychological dependence is when the user experiences an overwhelming desire to continue with the drug experience. This can be because of the pleasurable effects and the desire to keep experiencing them. It can, however, also represent some sort of psychological crutch. The drug experience can become a way of blocking out reality, making life bearable, and a way of facing the world. Without the crutch life seems worthless. It can happen with any drug or any activity which takes over a person's life including eating, sex, work, or jogging.